



Duties of Peace.

Our Nation's
Third Thanksgiving.

THE DUTIES OF PEACE.

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The Nation's Third Thanksgiving.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN

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ON DECEMBER 7, 1865,

BY THE

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THE DUTIES OF PEACE.



ECCLESIASTES, THIRD CHAPTER, FIRST AND EIGHTH VERSES.

1st verse: "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven."

8th verse: "A time of war, and a time of peace."

WHEN we met, a year ago, to celebrate the Thanksgiving appointed by the National authorities, I remarked to you that the occasion was such a signal one as to give it rank among the most eminent associations of our national history—an occasion, in fact, for public gratitude, which could be matched by only two others, namely, the first, when the nation sprang into birth by the assertion of the great principles of human right, and the last, when those rights should be practically made good to every person in the land. That last year's Thanksgiving claimed a place, though second in order of time, yet hardly second in importance and dignity to the first, that had already been, or to the third that was to be; because, happening in the midst of a war in

which the same great principles of right were eminently at stake, the people, in the might of their intelligent will, as expressed in the national elections, had pledged themselves afresh, and with wonderful eagerness, to maintain the issue on to the last possibility of their strength. That Thanksgiving was, therefore, as a sort of rejoicing for the first-fruits of the harvest—the festival of hope, whose pledge and earnest was already in hand. Yet it had, of course, some elements of uncertainty combined with it.

One, arising from the fickle chances of war, by which it often happens that the same sun which pours his mid-day splendor upon the glittering arms and gorgeous standards of a victorious army, will, as he goes down, send his level look across a field of torn and draggled banners, of begrimed and bloody armor, of confused heaps of dead and dying men, and of the same army, driven, discomfited, and despairing. This was one element of uncertainty that might render our rejoicing premature, and turn it to a grief.

The other element was that which belongs to the fluctuations of the popular will, which though in its convictions deep and still as the ocean's centre, bedded in its far-down chambers, and swaying only in quiet tides of omnipotence, might, nevertheless, by

some superficial disaster, be flurried, tossed, and lashed into transient fury, and carry wreck and woe as far as it reached.

But both these liabilities exhausted themselves without mischief. The nation ran the gauntlet of all adverse chances, and came out of the conflict with her vital unity never so sound and strong. And so speedy was the consummation, so mysterious the sudden collapse of the rebellion, as to suggest irresistibly the conviction of a superhuman element mingling in the affray.

Indeed, all through the war, there was now and then a thrusting in of an unseen force, that seemed to sway the tide of things, now with and now against us, in a way which attested a provident and powerful divinity shaping our ends and forcing them into harmony with its own.

The open eye of faith and reason, versed in the vision of divine principles and plans, could all along discern a dim form of majesty presiding over the field of terrors, watching with calm eye the changes of the fight, pointing the irresistible finger of destiny and seeming to say, "Thus let it be," and it was. It was the divine genius of government and law who, with one foot on each contested territory, claimed them both for the unity of its own sovereignty, and so augustly waiting, watching, and will-

ing, it guided or permitted the course of events, until the rebellion had stretched its tether to the utmost, and the wrath of man had towered to that profane pitch where it stands face to face with God, when God blasts it with his eye and makes that wrath turn to his praise. So, when the time was ripe, this august, divine genius of the nation would wait and watch no more. Wielding the sword that is bathed in heaven, he pierced the rebellion to its heart, and its life gushed out in sudden flood, and it lay there an instant corpse. And then the sword was sheathed; and, glued to its scabbard with thick patriot blood, it shall never be drawn again for like conflict in the history of our redeemed land.

Yet, suddenly as the rebellion collapsed, it left a few tokens of vitality here and there. It died, and not as one whose life wears out by disease, when the extremities are torpid first, and the chill and faintness creep up along the limbs, and the senses fail, and the brain succumbs, and the throat rattles; while the pulse still beats, and beats through long weary hours of disease. But it died as a man dies whose heart is stricken and burst; who falls in the street and is carried dead to his home, while yet the vital warmth pervades his frame and the extremities are the last to die. So, after the central power of the rebellion was hopelessly defeated, there were

threats and demonstrations in the remoter parts that showed a lingering spirit of war, and we had to stand and wait awhile till every fibre of the corpse grew stiff and cold.

Not till then could we pronounce the death complete, and, therefore, not till then could we thank God that the demon strife was over, and the land entirely at peace.

Now as the war represented the conflict of the great principles of the Republic, the peace denotes their adjustment and finality, and this, therefore, is the third great Thanksgiving of the nation, when the seed of our independence is ripened into freedom for all, and the joy for the first-fruits bursts again in the song of the harvest-home, for a race of men emancipated from the bondage of the body, and for a nation freed from the fetters of the soul, its folly and its crime.

The time of war is over then, with its terrors and its duties; for every time has its duties; and this rebellion was so charged with terrors, moral and social, as well as political and physical, as made a religion of loyalty, and a conscience of fighting, and rendered a patriot's death as glorious as a martyr's.

And with the change of times there comes a change in the complexion of our conscientiousness and a new set of practical obligations.

The same patriotism that wounded and hurt must now set itself to heal and restore; the holy loyalty that saw God in the Government and buffeted the foe who impiously assailed it, must now be changed to holy fraternity, and recognize in the foe a brother. It may be well, therefore, to consider in short detail some of the specific obligations that result from the new attitude of things, that is, *the duties of peace*.

Foremost in the file and most natural in the flush of joy is the duty of grateful memory toward them who have fought the great battle. They are the dead and the living. The dead died by almost every method of violence as well as of nature. On the battle-field, where the soldier lay with his pale face to the cold moon, and gasped away his life in the memories of the home far away; father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, or betrothed, grouping themselves around his bloody bed, and seeming to kiss him a farewell; in the thrice execrable prisons, where starvation, pestilence, and calculating cruelty struggled together for their victim, and wretchedness wrung every fibre that could feel before she administered the sweet relief of dying; from all the wide territory of the fight, rise the reminders of youth and of manhood, of courage, patriotism, patience, and piety, telling of the army of our bro-

thers who counted not their lives dear if their country might be free and one, and so consecrated themselves to death. We cannot but think of them on our Thanksgiving-day. But the gratitude we owe their memories is of that deep sort that comes out strongest in our secrecy, and never comes but with tears. We should wrong their spirits, that perhaps are watching and rejoicing with ours, if we could forget them; we should wrong our better selves, to refuse indulgence to impulses pure next to divinity, and we should wrong the divine abstract of truth and virtue, and so would wrong humanity and the world. May we never forget the dead by whom we live!

Nor yet forget the living. The soldier whom death has spared has a claim upon us no less affectionate and more practical.

We cannot forget him as a fact, for he is before our eyes at every turn, ununiformed, but maimed of a part of his manhood. But some may be in danger of forgetting him with their hearts, that is, not thinking of him kindly. For armies are thought to breed only vices and mischiefs, and a disbanded soldiery is a dread. But our experience shows the opposite of this, and the returned soldier carries at least the proof of a public virtue that constrains our reverence and admiration. His wounds are at

least a half consecration of him, appealing to our pity as much as to our gratitude.

We owe especially to the maimed soldier a great and practical debt. He has suffered for his country, and his suffering should be compensated. He is disqualified for a man's work, and his defect should be complemented by work that is easy. In the competition for labor the soldier should be preferred. By wages or by gratuities he should be made to feel continually that his country recognizes him, values him, is grateful to him, and that he has not endured and bled in vain. Each returned soldier has a right to feel that he has earned a meed of renown which, as it is a treasure to him, shall be a priceless legacy to his posterity. Of the huge honor which his country has accumulated to herself from the peerless patriotism and prowess of her magnificent armies, he may claim an integral part as a member in the grand copartnership of glory. Let the memories of the dead and the interests of the living soldier lie next our hearts in honorable and equal tenderness.

Let us join them there now, if not already joined, as a recognition of the *first* duty of peace.

Secondly. I name as a second duty, the very peculiar obligations that spring from our new rela-

tions to them who were lately our foes—our duty to the Southern people.

It is not easy to define or graduate it precisely, for it is a duty with discriminations; strong indeed, but very delicate withal.

From our common parentage and our common country, they and we are brothers; while from our diverse training in the school of life there grew such antagonisms of feeling, of sympathy, of conviction—of the whole habit of living and thinking—as could never be forced close together without explosion. The war was but the boiling over of differences, that had simmered with increasing heat for thirty years. The sense of brotherhood had died from the Southern heart long before the contempt and anger that supplanted it broke into battle. With that necessary narrowness, superciliousness, and passionateness which could not but be born of the most inveterate aristocracy in the world—the aristocracy of little despotisms—how could the South help spurning and scouting the general equality and freedom of the North; its care for the commonest of the people; its mental activities spurred into all sorts of speculation, whether in art or trade or thought; and the indefinite breadth of its social theories; constituting a democracy as essential as their aristocracy was intense? The conflict was as

inevitable as the seasons, passing from spring into summer and autumn, and ripening in the harvest of blood. And now the field of war is in its winter. Defeat has chilled and stripped it of every sign of fertility. But are there no seeds of strife lying beneath the icy covering? Where are the old antagonisms, contempts, dislikes, and prejudices—nursed close to the Southern heart and uncontradicted for so many years? It were too much and unnatural to suppose that the fortune of war has regenerated their social character. We have no right to expect conversion by the bayonet.

The faults by which the South was betrayed into its fratricidal rebellion, and which now react upon them in such pitiable penalty, were simply the faults of education—the natural consequence of caste and its imperfect civilization. The caste is broken up, because the slave is free and the power gone; but the educated character that lay behind the system lies there still, not unimpressed perhaps, but not yet radically changed.

The first movement of its new life to adapt itself to its new condition must be to unlearn all that it has so lovingly learned. A painful process—too much so to be cheerfully quick. As, according to the general law of social progress, it took the term of a generation for the theory of secession to ripen

into the fact of rebellion, so will its deceasing from the Southern mind be tedious and slow,* though quickened somewhat, no doubt, by the pungencies of defeat and necessity; when, out of its grave, there will be a resurrection of juster thought and wiser theory, by which the next generation will be exalted to better characteristics.

And again, the habit of authority which grows from the absolute power of one man over the rights and even the person of another, reacting upon the character, except in rare and admirable examples, in the forms of petulance, passionateness, caprice, arrogance, and cruelty, such as Mr. Jefferson has described; all this, the education of a lifetime, and the habit of the soul, is not to be changed in a moment to fit the swift change of their history.

There may be a tyrant without a victim, passion without gratification, and arrogance with none to be insulted; in a word, a character in being though not in action. It is this character, as educated and moulded by the aristocracy of slavery, which is to be educated over again, by the experiment of separating the two elements of its condition. It has to learn the unwonted lesson, how bootless its aristocracy is, now that its slavery is taken away. We must give it time, thankful if, after all, the quick revolution in Southern life may induce even a slow

and progressive, so that it be a total change in the slaveholding character.

So far, then, our duty to our Southern brethren suggests itself as a duty of kind consideration for the disabilities and errors under which they have been educated. They are still our brethren by virtue of the same parentage which their dislike cannot annul, and by virtue of our one country, which their rebellion could not divide.

The necessity of fraternity is laid upon them imperatively, and they will feel it by and by, and adjust themselves to its various pressure; at first, perhaps, with submission, and then with contentment, until, in the next generation, when the anger is only traditional and its provocation is long dead, the theory of our brotherhood will prove itself beautifully true, and Cassius and Brutus will embrace each other. The Northern and Southern characters will mingle and blend their traits into a composite, which in losing either element would lose a positive grace. Such a joint character we may suppose to represent the many-sided humanity which seems to be contemplated by our theory of polity, and required by our position among the nations—a generic human character, not only American but universal.

But while we wait for the South to learn this slow lesson of brotherhood, we must bear in mind

that we already know that lesson by heart, and are bound to its constant practice, yet still with discrimination. For, although North and South are twin-brothers, yet the North, by virtue of its greater advancement in the practice of Republican life, and by virtue of its successful strength, and, above all, by virtue of that filial duty to our common mother, which is supreme and sacreder than the fraternal, is entitled to the precedence of an elder brother, employing a disciplinary tutelage to impress upon the South the great lesson of the crisis.

It belongs to the North to expound the deep and radical significance of the war, to interpret the new social and political facts that are to form the platform of Southern life hereafter and always, into their two ideas; namely, that secession is a heresy and slavery an outrage upon our national life, both divinely demonstrated to be such by the wager of battle. Accepting the facts, the South may still reluctant and hesitate in conforming to the ideas; and during this stage of its novel experience, the North, in its capacity of teacher, must urge such gentle and salutary discipline as shall secure the habit at least, even if there is not yet the heart of allegiance and brotherhood. One thing above all others constitutes the duty of the North, to which all considerations of affection and policy must give place, which is, to

maintain in peace just as unflinchingly as in war the two vital truths for which we fought; namely, that the nation is one by an inviolable bond, which could not be disturbed by a whisper of secession or a murmur of discontent; and that slavery, dead in law, must die in fact; die no mere technical death, but die in spirit and power; die to the last twitch of its limbs; to the last breath; the last faint pulse; and the last long chill of the grave where it is to be buried.

These things secured, as by the grasp of a hand gauntleted in iron, every thing else may be handled with the velvet touch of forbearance and patient waiting till the petulance has passed away, and all excoriations and fretted spots are healed by the curative processes of nature, working in a constitution growing more healthy every day. This *second duty* of peace lies before us as the necessary sequel of the war, as momentous in spirit and consequence as the war itself.

Thirdly. We turn to a third duty, which I designate as the duty we owe to the freedmen of the South. And here our responsibility is singular and surpassing.

By a wonderful providence the war developed issues grander and more beneficent than the most heated heart of philanthropy dared to anticipate,

or a cool piety to pray for. The slavery that had overshadowed the Southern land with its Upas branches and shot its roots into the subsoil of Southern life, was not simply pruned of its limbs, or even felled to the surface, but extirpated, root as well as branch, and cast up to the sun to die.

God has transformed four millions of slaves to a grand community of freedmen. A nation has been born in a day. Their bowed and broken manhood stands erect in the dignity of a moral agency now as real as yours and mine. Still, it is only a manhood of capabilities. Untutored as yet in the theory and untrained in the practice of freedom, their great boon will be their ruin, if they are let alone. For freedom is an instinct of such expansiveness, that it rushes to exuberance and excess unless trellised and trained to orderly courses, by an outward or an inward force. The outward force is simple power, and the subjection to it is the same old slavery come again. The inward force is the intelligent moral sense, the power of conscience and reason in their divine self-assertion, restraining the man from evil and constraining him to ways of good. The theory of our government supposes every man competent by his intelligence and conscience to know the value and feel the force of law. It places every citizen on an open field and bids him take care of himself, without

let or hindrance other than those which are imposed by his joint duty to God and man. All else is to him a boundless sphere of personal development, and he alone is responsible for his success or failure. This is the simple and dignified meaning of American citizenship. And now every slave has become a citizen. God has decreed it. The war that saved the nation has accomplished it, and the nation has to meet and manage the great fact as it best can of an accretion of four millions of citizens to its population. The one way to meet it is to educate the freedman into a citizen, to teach him self-dependence, and thrift, and progress, by the same processes that train our Northern citizens for life and its work.

Our common-school system, the honor of our land and the source and guarantee of our freedom, must in some sort be extended to the South. I say extended, for it will not originate there.

Popular education is an idea abhorrent to Southern traditions; and even if, with the best intent, Southern men should accept the work of educating the freedmen, they would labor under peculiar though unconscious disabilities. Believing in their deliberate judgment that the black man is of a hopelessly inferior race; convinced, devoutly as they profess to be, that slavery is his God-appointed des-

tiny; how can they, with free heart and will, devote themselves to a work which is forever across the grain, and which they deem but a stultification of common-sense?

It is useless to deny, therefore, that the education of the freedmen must come chiefly, at least, from the North. From this land, fertile of schoolmasters, must go the teachers of the black man. They must go in squads, in regiments, in corps; an army of the missionaries of civilization, to shed light into dark minds, to transform semi-brutes to intelligent creatures, to restore the domestic relation, establish parental responsibility, and, in a word, to create a social organism and turn a huge herd into a vast community.

Viewed in its Christian aspect, the work stands exalted to the noblest level of philanthropy; for it not only aims to save the ignorant individual soul by the inspiration of Divine truth, but it takes the whole community and carries it forward in the career of enlightenment, that illustrates the broadest power of Christianity as a restoring element, regenerating not only a man, but mankind. To this work, then, let us gird ourselves, for it is the one great work of the period. God has given us the black man in answer to our prayers for peace and unity. He is God's pledge to us of the divine care

of the nation. If we slight the pledge, we may forfeit the protection, and the black man may be the skeleton in our house. But if we seize the pledge, cherish it, and put our minds in unison with God's by carrying on his plan for the freedmen, then by this token we know that God is with us of a truth and will make our land, as it is the sanctuary of the nations, to be likewise the holy place where he loves to dwell.

During the war the charities of the North ran in deep, wide channels of help for the soldier. The Sanitary and Christian Commissions engrossed the sympathy and support of all Christian and patriotic people.

The advent of peace has closed those channels of beneficence and dammed up the tide of charity into stagnancy.

It were a pity that the ennobling feeling should have no vent, and God reveals a wider, deeper channel yet for the blessed beneficence.

How long the freedmen will need our help we cannot pronounce with definiteness, but certainly until the new light that has dawned on Southern life shall convince the Southern people that their own paramount interest, as well as their high duty, demands that the black man shall be trained for a civil position of possible equality with their own;

till they shall be convinced that the only safety of their community lies in the self-governing power of those who have hitherto been only governed. They must learn the force of Mr. Burke's maxim, that "education is the cheap defence of a nation;" and its corollary that it is peculiarly the life and health and wealth of their own community. Then the great work will be self-supporting; for then that sense of interest which has heretofore made the slave seem indispensable to Southern prosperity, and that warm, strong love which has in many beautiful instances identified the master affectionately with his servant, will seek a higher range of exercise. Interest and affection both will combine to make the white man solicitous for the best interests of the black, who by the fact of his freedom has come so much nearer home to the welfare of the South.

The specific charity to which we are called, then, is to educate the freedman in those common elements of learning which will qualify him to act for himself in his business, and so lay the foundation for any greater advancement for which his faculties may be capable.

But more immediately than this, your sympathy and aid are required for his physical wants, which are just now distressing beyond degree. The sufferers are numbered by scores of thousands, who are

in a state of destitution near to perishing. Their chief want is of clothing, which is so far gone that, while a year ago they were clad in rags, now the very rags are worn out. For this object your charities will be asked to-day, and I beseech you, for Christ's dear sake, who loves them as He loves us, to open your hearts and purses wide.

And now, brethren, that we have reviewed some of the duties of peace, as suggested by this Thanksgiving, do we realize indeed the grandeur of the benefits with which we have been endowed by the war?

Remember the foundation which our fathers laid in the Declaration of Independence for a political structure which should be perfectly unique. The history of the world furnished no pattern for it. Experience had for the most part contradicted its fundamental principle, that the people's will is sovereign, and that the people must be free. But they appealed to the Governor of the universe for the justification of their theory, and launched forth the great fabric upon the ocean of possibilities. It was perhaps the vastest and most critical experiment of human nature since the probation of the first man in Eden.

The old world looked on amazed, and all men augured a failure. Yet the nation grew larger, and

its freedom grew freer and more democratic through long years of prosperity, until even that most philosophical of all the political students of our system, De Tocqueville, doubted whether a government founded on the people's will would bear the tug and strain of a long trial; and whether that will so vigorous in action, was yet so underlaid with wisdom as to stand firm in a crisis of endurance and self-sacrifice. And very few were the minds which dared to meet that doubt with the open face of hope: and when they remembered that there was one rotten timber in the ship of state; that the Republic was actually living on in contradiction of the great principle of human equality, which was the corner-stone of its theory, a principle dear to God himself; they might well contemplate the future of the nation with a sort of terror, as for a second downfall of the race.

But the war has demonstrated beyond all controversy that the Republic is no longer an experiment. In such manifold trials as no nation ever endured before, the main principle of our polity has not only proved itself staunch against evil, but even most prolific of good. It broke forth in a thousand spontaneities of beautiful and virtuous expression. Its patriotism rushed like a fresh gale; its wealth flowed like a river; its charity never failed; its piety grew warmer as the battle waged hotter; ex.

hibiting the singular spectacle of revivals in camps and prayer-meetings amidst whistling bullets. Volunteer heroism with both sexes and with every class was like leaves in June, and the people greeted our victories, not with carousings, but with thanksgivings. The golden pavement of Wall street became the floor of a temple and its tide of chaffering tumult was turned to a heavenward chorus of hallelujahs. And amidst the varying expression of goodness, and towering above it all, was the rare and august fact of the Government itself—so often ruling by expediency, or by corruption, or by policy, or by power—the Government administered by that martyr man of many weeping memories, who governed always as under God, whose tragic death was the only unmitigated horror of the war—the Government grandly avowed piety as its policy and religion as the truest reason of state; and thus for the first time in our history turned the whole momentum of national authority to the ends of pure justice and benevolence; and thus I devoutly believe the nation came out of the war better and more religious than it had ever been before.

The perilous power of self-government had proved itself safe having God for its guide; and the great experiment of the people's will stands vindicated to-day to all the world.

And now that the anomaly and blunder of slavery is obliterated from our fundamental statutes, and the political falsehood under which we have lived so long is redressed by the cumulative consent of the States, completed just in time to crown the crisis and verify the great Thanksgiving for peace, what more can be asked for the Republic? And in the face of such demonstration of good, what can be feared for the Republic?

“Only the tried and noble soul
 Like seasoned timber never gives,
 But when the whole earth turns to coal
 Then chiefly lives.”

Its foundation tested sternly, its structure braced and balanced, its proportions just, its weak elements cast out and replaced by strong, the fabric of our Government seems to-day a glorious political temple meet for the God of nations to abide in.

God does abide in it. The war was his scourge of whips to purge the temple for his advent.

This third Thanksgiving, that now can have no peer, heralds his entrance among his chosen people. O God! abide here always! Let our political structure—since nothing now is wanting to its completeness or safety—let it put on fresh adornments of piety and purity, attesting gloriously that we are a nation elected of God, and that God is with us of a truth—our Emmanuel!

